

MEMORANDUM

THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN

ON-FILE NSC
RELEASE
INSTRUCTIONS
APPLY

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

INFORMATION

August 8, 1970

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DIA review Completed.

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: Henry A. Kissinger HK

SUBJECT: Report from a Contact of General Walters

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H - a bit
on the hopeful
side for
a change!

We have received another report from General Walters' French contact in Paris, which makes some interesting points.

Situation in North Vietnam

--The economic situation in North Vietnam is very serious. Letters arriving in France ask for many goods which, in contrast to the past, are now openly received in the DRV. Many peasants are hiding rice.

--Family life is disturbed and the Cambodian operation has brought mourning to 10,000 families. Some families have three sons under arms, starting at age 14. Parents never hear from soldiers fighting in the south. No soldiers return on leave.

--Catholics are more active, saying the Rosary together and putting religious images in place. When the Archbishop of Hanoi decided to organize a Congress, the Government opposed it but had to relent when 100,000 signatures were collected in 20 days.

--The weight of the war has fallen on North Vietnam since the Khmer Rouge and Pathet Lao are militarily worthless. The overriding feeling is one of loss of military and political initiative. Despite all DRV sacrifices, peace can only come from outside, with even the Chinese using "our struggle" as bargaining material in the case of a Sino-American thaw.

--Xuan Thuy will be returning to Paris but there is less certainty about Le Duc Tho. Thuy has moved up in the hierarchy.

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Factions in Hanoi Leadership

In addition to these points, Walters' friend made confusing remarks about the existence of two camps with allegedly different attitudes toward Peking, as follows:

--The U. S. move in Cambodia has created a drastic change in the situation. As a result of this, one of two groups in North Vietnam is full of anger, humiliation, and distrust that the Vietnamese have again become the "toys" of the Chinese. The Chinese are giving front-page play to such monarchical personalities as Sihanouk and paying less attention to such old Communists as Pham Van Dong. At the Canton meeting, China resumed the role of the coordinating power for Indochina. There is also resentment of the irony that North Vietnam, a socialist nation, is forced to support two Princes (Sihanouk and Souphanouvong). The North Vietnamese have no confidence in Sihanouk.

--The second group is aggressively anti-Chinese. Le Duan and several others -- such as Giap and Dong -- are in this group. But the Soviets are far away and the Chinese are very close. They also control the supply lines, especially since the closing of the Cambodian ports. Le Duan's manifesto earlier this year was worked up in conjunction with Kremlin experts. The Soviets had told him to bring his party back to strict orthodoxy, to decelerate the war, and to move toward negotiations to achieve an honorable peace.

--Le Duan's manifesto was opposed by pro-Chinese elements of the Lao Dong in April, and he subsequently decided on a purge of the party. But it is not certain he can do it, because of the Chinese.

--The Chinese will not treat North Vietnam as Moscow treated the Czechs, but they will act like Asiatics through subversion, assassination, and promotion of young turks trained in Peking. They are already working on the Montagnards.

--The North Vietnamese Communists, "pathetically" attacked to the Soviets, will not be able to escape from the heavy Chinese hand.

Comment

Much of this sounds plausible, particularly the discussion of internal North Vietnamese problems, although we have no proof of it. I can

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well imagine also that good Communist cadre find it hard to fight for princes whom they must consider anachronisms. I have difficulty with the reasoning about the two camps in Hanoi, since the report actually seems to speak of three. One, whose members are not defined, resents the way Peking has taken over the war and is using Hanoi. Another, including Le Duan, Giap and Dong, is sympathetic to Moscow and would like to move toward negotiations but is stymied by the Chinese. A third is pro-Chinese and wields ultimate control because China is close and indispensable.

As usual, I think these divisions are somewhat overdrawn though I cannot disprove them. I think if an important faction in Hanoi wanted to negotiate with Soviet support they would find ways of making this known. I also still have my doubts that Hanoi is so much in Peking's pocket that the Chinese can overrule three of the most powerful men in the Politburo and impose their own policy while making North Vietnam pay the price in lives and ideological compromises.

I still believe that the main fact we need to bear in mind regarding the Hanoi politburo is that after Ho's death the party has no man strong enough to turn the party around from war to any questionable compromise. But they also lack a man strong enough to make the population continue forever to make the sacrifices required for victory. They still see no way out of their dilemma except to keep slogging at any level they can, hoping that we will be compelled to accept their terms by collapse of U. S. will or of South Vietnamese resistance. It is not a cheery prospect for them.

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